WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE A. F. OF L., BY INSTRUCTION OF ST. LOUIS CONVENTION, DIRECTED THE OFFICERS AT HEADQUARTERS TO FURNISH A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER, FREE OF COST, TO ALL OFFICIAL LABOR PUBLICATIONS.

Containing a brief summary of important matters, affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will further the development and progress of the trade union movement

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
HEADQUARTERS
801-809 G ST. N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.
FRANK MORRISON, SECRETARY SAMUEL GOMPERS, PRESIDENT

No. 47.

CONTEMPT OF COURT CASE

Messrs. Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison Holding Steadfastly to Their Constitutional Right of Free Speech and Free Press.

Washington, Feb.24.--The trial now in progress of President Gompers, Vice-President Mitchell and Secretary Morrison for contempt of court, reveals no change in the attitude of the Federation officials. They have contended persistently that their rights under the constitution shall be maintained. The defendants insist that they did nothing in furtherance of the boycott after the injunction was made operative by the court, although it was admitted by them that they did exercise their right to discuss the case upon the platform and in the official publication of the American Federation of Labor, the Federationist. This case has been in the courts over four years, and the position of the Federation officials is the same today as it was when the proceedings were commenced, and there will be no wavering in their attitude toward the fundamental question involved in this contest. The question involved is of such a vital character as to make it imperative to employ every legal means to protect the inherent rights of not only the members of organized labor, but of every citizen.

THE LAWRENCE STRIKE

Washington, Feb.24.--In a communication just received from Lawrence, Mass., the statement is made that the strike is still effective. It is said that the manufacturers begin to feel that it has been an unwise move in the past to fight the organization of their employes. John Golden, president of the Textile Workers' Union, is assisting in every way possible in the strike and reports progress being made. The American Federation of Labor has approved the appeal for funds, and James R. Menzie, treasurer, 184 Broadway, Lawrence, Mass., has been authorized to receive and receipt for all money sent to him. This money will be used exclusively in aid of the strikers.

CHILDRENS BUREAU BILL

Washington, Feb.24.--The Children's Bureau bill, which passed the senate recently, is now under consideration by the house labor committee. Chairman Wilson is hopeful that this bill will be reported out favorably within a very short time.

SULZER EXPECTED TO TESTIFY

Washington, Feb. 24.--Congressman Sulzer has been asked to testify before Justice Wright in the contempt case now being tried in this city. It will be remembered that Mr. Sulzer read into the Congressional Record about the time the Bucks Stove and Range case was a burning issue an editorial from the American Federationist, written by President Gompers. This speech was printed in pamphlet form and was scattered broadcast throughout the country. Following the editorial referred to was what is known in printing parlance as "a filler", or short editorial paragraph which stated in substance "that no court could compel any one to buy a Bucks stove or range, not even a Loewe hat." Attorneys for Messrs. Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison are expecting that the congressman will testify before the close of the hearing that the court may be advised as to the reasons prompting him to have the editorial read into the Congressional Record.

BRITISH MINE SITUATION

Washington, Feb.24.--Within a few days it will be known whether or not the 800,000 miners in Great Britain will enforce their demands by a general strike. Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, has described the impending strike as "the greatest national catastrophe in our history." The miners are endeavoring to learn whether foreign mine workers will assist them. A meeting of the executive committee of the International Miners' Federation has been held in London to discuss this phase of the situation. There is also a sympathetic feeling in the Transport Workers' Federation. From present indications, taking into consideration the attitude of the coal operators, the strike is practically inevitable.

THEY ARE JUST HUMAN

Topeka, Kans, Feb.24.--A movement is on in this state that promises to throw several hundred preachers out of a job. From numerous localities come reports of concerted efforts in religious revivals of a getting together of adherents of all denominations, and appeals are being made to bring the members of all churches into one religious movement. The preachers of these various denominations are vigorously opposing the movement. It is said that there are about 500 towns and communities in this State where people are keeping up three or four church organizations and if there should be an amalgamation many ministers, of course, would be looking for jobs.

WANTS MOUNT VERNON

Washington, Feb.24.--The agitation of the abolition of the fee system at Mount Vernon and the maintenance by the federal government as a national institution the home of George Washington, has taken concrete form in the introduction of a resolution by Representative Carry of Wisconsin. Mr. Carry provides in his resolution the creation of a commission to investigate the subject, and provides for a commission composed of three senators and five representatives to procure the necessary information upon which to base an appropriation to place the control of Mount Vernon in the hands of the government.

SWEATSHOP GOODS EXHIBITED

Washington, Feb,24.--As a part of its campaign to better the working conditions of women and children in Washington, as well as the women and children employed in factories, in stores, and in their homes throughout the country, the Consumers' League of the District of Columbia has just held an exhibit in the parish hall of Epiphany church. The desire of the Consumers' League is to do away with sweatshop and tenement labor, not only to aid the workers by compelling manufacturers to have their work done in sanitary factories at living wages, but also to safeguard the consumers from the danger of disease. Babies which are clothed in the finely made caps and dresses, made in sweatshops, are in danger of being affected with consumption and other diseases. The consumers' League has adopted a label to be placed on goods manufactured under sanitary conditions at fair wages, and sixty-five factories have adopted this label, after satisfying the league that the conditions under which the employees are employed were proper. The establishment of minimum wage boards and the enactment of laws curtailing the hours of labor for women and children are on the program. Especial interest in this city is being taken in the welfare of women and girls employed in retail stores and soon a "white list" of stores will be published, which will designate the Washington stores that pay their employes fair wages and concede fair working hours.

IMMIGRANTS' ILLITERACY TEST

Washington, Feb.24.--Undoubtedly there will be a stubborn fight in the senate over the illiteracy test provision to be placed in the general immigration laws. The Dillingham bill is based on the recommendations of the immigration commission and aims to revise generally the immigration laws. The bill has been taken up for committee amendments on the motion of Senator Lodge, chairman of the senate committee on immigration, and many changes were adopted. When the clause calling for the illiteracy test was introduced a fight was precipitated and the matter was laid over for future consideration. Senator Overman has submitted an amendment increasing the head tax from $4 to $10, and proposing that any surplus in the immigration fund collected from incoming foreigners shall be given to the states and territories for the support of farm-life schools in which boys and girls shall receive instructions to prepare them for agricultural pursuits. Other amendments are in preparation and no doubt discussion will be prolonged.

MITCHELL WILL REPLY

Washington, Feb.24.--John Mitchell, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor will comply with the suggestion of Justice Wright that he make clear his views and attitude on his duty and his conception of the duty of his followers in the American Federation of Labor to obey the injunctions of courts. It will be remembered that Mr. Mitchell, when testifying before the court, made very plain his attitude in reference to injunctions, but Justice Wright offered the suggestion as noted above, and Mr. Mitchell will make known his views again, which will be incorporated in the testimony.

ILLINOIS MINERS' AGREEMENT

Washington, Feb. 24.--Fuel, a publication devoted to the interests of the mining operators, has this to say, relative to the agreement which exists between the coal miners and the operators of Illinois. "Considerable confusion exists as to the existence or non-existence in Illinois of an agreement by which the Illinois miners will continue at work after March 31, pending the negotiation of a new agreement. The fact is that when the present contract between the operators and the miners of Illinois was signed there was a provision inserted in the contract that, subject to the ratification of both the operators and the miners, work continue during these negotiations. The meeting of the operators ratified this provision, known as clause 32 of the contract. The miners in their convention the following January, which was a year ago, decided to postpone action until this year. Their convention will meet in Springfield, Feb. 20, when the provision may or may not be ratified by them. If they ratify it work will continue in case no contract be concluded prior to March 31. If they fail to ratify it, then work will stop on March 31, in the absence of a prior contract, until a new contract be completed."

STEEL COMPANY'S BLACK LIST

Washington, Feb.24.--A black list of men discharged from the employ of the steel mills of the Pittsburgh district, alleged to have been circulated among the steel manufacturers, was discussed recently before the Stanley investigating committee by J. H. Seldes, a reporter for the Pittsburgh Leader. Seldes declared he had seen the list, which embraced several thousand names, and had visited several men whose names appeared on the list. A demand was made upon Seldes for the source of his information. "I am under promise not to divulge the name of the man who has the copy of the list which I saw and worked on. The man who has it told me that the steel corporation would give thousands of dollars for it, and that he was afraid that if it became known that he had it he would be slugged and the list taken from him." Congressman Gardner demanded that Seldes give the name of his informant and he was ordered to answer and he replied: "I saw the list in the possession of H. A. Eagle who was City Editor of the Pittsburgh Leader."

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION BILL

Washington, Feb.24.--A bill has been introduced in the house of representatives by Congress Lever of South Carolina, which opposes the provisions of the Page industrial education bill. The latter bill is comprehensive and follows closely the ideas of the American Federation of Labor in reference to this subject. The Lever bill is introduced evidently in the sole interest of the agricultural colleges and eliminates many of the essential and important features of the general education bill. It is not thought, however, that the Lever bill will be considered seriously in the final determination.

EIGHT HOURS ON CIVIC WORK

Nelson, B. C. Feb.24.--The city council has inaugurated the eight-hour day on all civic work and adopted a minimum wage of forty cents per hour.

CONVICTS FLOGGED

Washington, Feb.24.--The convict labor conditions that prevail in the operation of subsidiary plants of the United States Steel company, particularly in Alabama, were recently probed by the House Steel Trust Investigating committee. Shelby M. Harrison of New York, a magazine writer, testified that he had made an exhaustive investigation of these conditions. Mr. Harrison told of the large number of state and county convicts in the camps of Alabama, and of minor offenses for which some of these men had been convicted, and as a penalty made to work in the mines. He stated that men who created no other offense than walking on the right of way of railroads had been arrested for misdemeanor, convicted and ordered to work in the mines. Mr. Harrison said that the State of Alabama derived an annual revenue of about $400,000 from convict labor leases, and that the wardens in the labor camps, who frequently flog the convicts, are employes of the steel company. Mr. Harrison also stated that he once saw a prisoner flogged with a three-ply leather strap. Mr. Stanley, chairman of the investigating committee, inquired particularly if the men convicted of misdemeanors were walking on railroad rights of way, playing golf on Sunday and similar offenses, were subject to flogging as punishment in the camps, and Mr. Harrison replied affirmatively. Mr. Harrison said that the convict laborers are forced to lie flat on their faces to be flogged, a strap five feet long usually being the instrument of torture, with fifteen lashes the usual punishment.

TO VOTE ON SINGLE TAX

Seattle, Wash. Feb.24.--The single tax proposition to be voted on in this city on March 5, is in the form of two amendments. The first amendment provides for the gradual exemption from taxation for City purposes for improvements on land, 25% in 1912 and 1913, 50% in the next two years, 75% in 1916 and 100% thereafter. The second amendment provides for the complete exemption from city taxes after July 1, 1912, of all improvements on land and all personal property except leasehold interest in land and franchise of public service corporations.

CANAL BARGEMEN'S DISPUTE

London, Feb.24.--The dispute, in which upwards of 500 men are involved and the entire carrying business of the Leeds and Liverpool Company is stopped, has been on for six weeks. The company, it is stated, has expressed a desire for a settlement, but the men decline to enter into an agreement with the Company unless assured that such agreement can be guaranteed permanent and real, by complete recognition of the union. James O'Grady, M. P., and Ben Tillett, are in charge of affairs for the employed.

INVESTIGATING HIGH PRICES

Washington, Feb.24.--The high cost of living is being investigated by the department of justice, to determine in what measure it is due to trusts or other combinations. Special agents have been instructed to observe all affects of combinations upon prices to the consumer and to ascertain, so far as possible, who is making undue profits.

GETS WORK FOR ALIENS

Washington, Feb.24.--There were 30,657 aliens, naturalized citizens and native Americans who got information from the government regarding opportunities for employment and places for home building in this country in the fiscal year of 1911, as compared with 18,239 in 1910, according to a statement just submitted by the chief of the division of information of the Department of Commerce and Labor. This work has been undertaken by the United States to more quitably distribute the immigrant population and as a means of relieving the congestion of aliens in the eastern part of the country. The statement declares that the need for agricultural help is so great that in many instances farmers do not hestitate to intercept help directed to their neighbors and by offering larger inducements secure their services. The wonder is that many more are not turned aside from their destinations.

TO PROBE PASS ABUSES

Washington, Feb.24.--In answer to the demands resulting from the continued complaints of violations of the law from every city in the Union, the Interstate Commerce Commission has issued an executive order for a rigid investigation into the alleged abuse of passes, franks, and free services by the railroads of the country. The taking of testimony and depositions will commence shortly in every state in the Union. It is stated it will take many months to complete the gathering of evidence and that the final report of the commission may not be arrived at before next year.

MAKE FUN OF HEYBURN

Washington, Feb. 24.--A local paper prints the following: "senator Heyburn was addressing the senate on the subject of the south in that typical Heyburnian way of his. He had just finished convicting the confederacy of all degrees of murder and was passing on to arson when in the press gallery a tired voice said, "They ought to muzzle that man." "Why should they?" asked a person near by, feeling he had to say something. "If they don't", said the voice impressively, "he is going to bite himself soon and die of hydrophobia."

MINING DEPARTMENT

Indianapolis, Ind., Feb.24.--Representatives of the Western Federation of Miners and the United Mine Workers recently met and permanently organized the mining department, American Federation of Labor. Charles H. Moyer of Denver, Colo., president of the Western Federation of Miners, was elected chairman of the new department, with Frank J. Hayes and Edwin Perry of the United Mine Workers, vice-president and secretary respectively.

PUPILS DEFECTIVE

Boston, Mass. Feb.24.--Sixty-five per cent of 35,503 of Boston's public school pupils are physically defective, according to a report of William G. Callivan, Boston's chief school physician.

HEBREW PRINTERS GET RAISE

New York, Feb.24--The Hebrew Typographical Union has reached an agreement with the Hebrew Printers' League and a strike of the Jewish printers has been avoided. The agreement runs for three years and the men employed in the book and job offices will now work 46 hours per week all year round instead of 46 hours three months of the year and 48 hours the balance of the year. Their wages are increased from $21 to $23 per week for the first year, $23.50 for the second year and $24 for the third year. The newspaper scale was raised from $27 to $28 per week for the first year, $29 the second year and $30 per week for the third year, with double time for work performed on legal holidays.

REPORT NEARLY READY

Washington, Feb.24--The official report of the commission on Employers' Liability and Workmen's Compensation will soon be made to the president. The document will be interesting as it affects every individual worker employed by railroad companies. There is incorporated an appendix illustrating accident conditions in the United States and other countries, and showing the legal methods dealing therewith. It is the intention of the commission to mail these reports to the secretaries of all organizations in which railroad employes are members. The American Federation of Labor will supply those desiring a copy upon request.

RAIL INVESTIGATION

Washington, Feb.24--A number of railroad presidents held a conference recently in New York, the purpose of which was to investigate the improvement of the character and quality of steel rails. The conference resulted in an appointment of a committee to investigate the matter, and report its findings to a future meeting.

OFFERS AMENDMENT

Washington, Feb.24.--Senator Rayner of Maryland has introduced a resolution in the senate calling on the judiciary committee to suggest changes in or amendments to the Sherman anti-trust law. It is declared in the resolution that recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court, holding generally that the circumstances of each case determine whether or not a combination is in violation of the anti-trust law, have raised a feeling of doubt and uncertainty, and the resolution aims to remedy this defect.

IMMIGRATION STATISTICS

Washington, Feb.24.--The bureau of immigration and naturalization has just issued its report covering the month of October, 1911. During that month there was admitted to this country 69,418 immigrants. The largest number from any one country came from Germany, being 7,433, with the following large numbers from other countries: Southern Italy 7,176 English 6,138, Polish 5,806, Irish 5,237, Hebrew 4,776, Scandanavian 4,044. The balance of the immigrants came from some 25 or 30 other countries.

CHANGE THEIR MINDS

London, Feb.24.--In the aftermath of the great cotton lockout it is learned that the non-unionists, Mr. and Mrs. J. Riley, who were responsible for the closing down of the mills, have practically retreated from their former position. When the mills reopened, as a result of an agreement, Mr. and Mrs. Riley returned to their looms, but only for a short period, when Mrs. Riley joined the Weavers' association Mr. Riley left the mill in search of other employment, but with the assertion upon his part that upon obtaining employment he would also join the Weavers' Association.

WEAVERS GAINING MEMBERSHIP

London, Feb.24.--A progressive campaign is being conducted by the Weavers' association for the purpose of increasing its membership. The lockout has had a beneficial effect on this campaign and there has been an addition of thousands of operatives since the lockout, and information is to the effect that continued progress may well be expected.

SHIPYARD TROUBLES

London, Feb.24.--In a recent conference held between the shipbuilding employers and that standing committee of the shipyard trades, the results were unsatisfactory. The employers contended that the discharge note system was necessary, while the officials of the unions involved opposed it and suggested a way out of the difficulty by cooperation between the employers and the union. The employers refused to give the plan a trial, although the union was favorable to a readjustment of the plan should it prove unworkable. Matters at this time are in statu quo.

TRADE UNION PROGRESS

London, Feb.24.--The report of the chief registrar, just issued, shows that at the end of 1910 there were 669 registered trade unions in the United Kingdom and of these 638 sent in particulars of their operations, showing that their membership had increased by 59,752, or 3%, as compared with 1909. Their combined income was increased by $700,000. At the end of 1910 there were 2,018,000 trade unionists in this country, having an income of over $15,500,000, and a reserve balance of $25,500,000.

THAMES IRON WORKS BALLOT

London, Feb.24.--The result of the ballot taken by the workmen of the Thames Iron Works company was overwhelmingly in favor of working forty-eight hours per week instead of the suggested fifty-three hours. It had been suggested to the men that if they would agree to lengthen their hours of labor a contract for building two more dreadnaughts on the Thames might fall to their lot, the employers arguing that this action would keep thousands of men in work for a considerable period. Ninety-five per cent of the ballots were cast for the forty-eight hour week, thus showing the strong tendency to maintain the shorter workday.

OREGON LAW UPHELD

Washington, Feb.24.--Only congress, and not the supreme court of the United States, may object to the initiative and referendum method of legislation in the states, was the decision handed down by the United States supreme court. It was an unanimous decision. The case which involved the question of the constitutionality of the initiative and referendum originated in Oregon, when a certain telephone company objected to a tax imposed upon it by the initiative and referendum, and carried the case on appeal to the high tribunal. This sets at rest any question as to the constitutionality of the law in question.

ENGINEERS WANT MORE PAY

New Haven, Conn. Feb.24.--The demands presented to the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad company by the local officials of the Brotherhood of Engineers, seek an increase of wages for both passenger and freight engineers on a sliding scale, based on capacity of engines. They also asked for an increase in the overtime rates. These demands are similar to those of the concerted movement of engineers, which covers some sixty lines east of the Mississippi and north of the Chesapeake and Ohio lines, and involves a total of 25,000 engineers.

SEAMEN'S BILL

Washington, Feb.24.--The Seamen's bill, which has been under consideration for some time before the merchant marine and fisheries committee, has been referred to a sub-committee for the purpose of correcting some minor defects. It is expected that the corrected bill will shortly be referred back to the full committee and then reported out to the floor of the house for action.

WASHINGTON TRADE UNIONISTS

Washington, Feb.24--The banquet held at the New Ebbitt house in honor of President Gompers and Secretary Morrison was largely attended. The object of this function was to accentuate the feeling of confidence which is felt by the members of organized labor in the integrity and loyalty of the chief officials of the labor movement.

MAPLE CASE DISMISSED

Washington, Feb.24.--A dispatch has been received in this city that A. B. Maple, one of the men indicted for the dynamiting of the Hall of Records in Los Angeles, has been discharged. Like many other dispatches carried by press associations, its authenticity cannot be guaranteed.

JOHN MITCHELL A CONTRIBUTOR

Washington, Feb.24.--John Mitchell, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor, and now occupying the lecturer platform, has been engaged to write one page a month for the official organ of the fraternal order of Moose.

TO REDUCE EXPRESS RATES

Washington, Feb. 24.--It is stated that there will be reported to the house of representatives shortly a bill prescribing the rates to be charged by express companies engaged in interstate commerce. The bill was introduced by Representative Adamson of Georgia, chairman of the house committee on interstate and foreign commerce. It is stated that if this bill becomes a law the earnings of the express companies will be cut in half.

STEEL CAR BILL

Washington, Feb.24.--A bill has been introduced in the house providing that after January 1, 1915, none but steel cars shall be used by railroads engaged in interstate commerce. In addition to this another bill has been introduced requiring that all engineers and enginemen employed by railroads engaged in interstate commerce shall be licensed. The latter measure provides for the appointment by the president of a chief examiner at $4,000 per year, and four assistant examiners at $3,000 to pass on the qualifications of engineers seeking licenses. Under the terms of the act any engineer running a train without first having secured a license is liable to a fine of $1,000 or imprisonment for one year or both. Any company allowing an engineer to run a train without a license is also to be fined $1,000.

SERIOUS SHIP DISPUTE

London, Feb.24--Serious trouble has broken out at the Glasgow docks where 5,000 men have stopped work, owing to 123 firms posting notices insisting upon new working terms. The shipowners have notified their regular customers that they intend to suspend all sailings from the port until the dispute has been settled.

NEW WAITERS UNION

London, Feb. 24--There has been formed in London a new union which will cater for all classes of waiters and bears the title of the National Union of Waiters. The new union will demand better wages and conditions of work in clubs and hotels and the campaign is to be at once inaugurated to bring this about. Some of the clubs and hotels have already advanced wages. The organization starts out with nearly 1,000 members.

RAILWAY TROUBLE

London, Feb.24--The railway men are not satisfied with the working of the terms of settlement reached after the recent strike. Complaints are made that certain railway companies have not adhered to the terms and have introduced methods which have displaced a great many men. Four of the railroad unions, the A. S. R. S., the General Railway Workers' Union, the United Pointsmen and Signalmen's Society and the Associated Society of Locomotivemen, have practically decided to amalgamate, thus preparing for any difficulty which may occur in the future.